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Moving through Multi-level Assessment Framework in English for Occupational Purposes: Toward a Curriculum Enactment Approach in Translator Training

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Abstract

In this article, the assessment of more extended, professionally-oriented discourse is approached with a view to introduce a way for the promotion of a type of curriculum for teaching more productive domain discourse with professional rather than academic purposes which fosters transfer of foreign language training across different tasks and situations as well as a deep level of understanding in the situated lesson. To this end, transfer dimensions, that's to say, theory of knowing and learning, levels of relationship to a particular learning environment and function of assessment practice, have been considered in the light of Hickey and Pellegrino's multilevel assessment framework; Shawer's (2010) types of curricula have also been used to align the multiple types of assessment to our curricular and lesson plan approaches and strategies; from there, the author goes on to discuss the implications of such an assessment-based enacted curriculum for translator training courses with occupational purposes.

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Keywords: Curriculum enactment approach; English for occupational purposes (EOP); Multi-level assessment

1. Introduction

1.1. Translation syllabus in Iran: Challenges

As mentioned in the translation teaching history in Iran (Riazi & Razmjoo, 2004; Jamalimanesh, 2009), the current practice of translator training in Iranian universities has failed to provide the adequate expertise and training which is often expected from such programs. In other words, such courses do not train students to pursue a

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professional career in translation and translation classes have only had academic rather than professional goals (Mohammad Amer, 2010).

In this article, translator training exercise has been approached from a more Occupationally / Professionally (EOP / EPP) - oriented perspective (Widdowson, 1983) with the assessment based syllabus as a bridging point in Academic / Professional purposes dichotomy; it is hoped that through mapping the multi- level assessment framework onto the translator trainers' curriculum approaches and strategies, the resulted enacted curriculum can pave the way for training more expert translators who are fully aware of the discursive realities of the their professional world.

2. Course design with occupational purposes

According to Widdowson (1983), in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) syllabus there has been no distinction between the eventual target behavior of the learners (aims) and the pedagogical constructs which enable the learners to achieve the behavioral targets (objectives), so that the content of the course will be determined based on the 'needs analysis of a specific purpose language situation'. In other words, 'ESP teaching suffered from a lack of theoretical motivation for course design, and become a very narrowly focused training exercise in which learners were taught specific behaviors but not strategies enabling them to adapt to new, unspecifiable situations' (Douglas, 2000, p. 11)

As Widdowson points out (1983), including a kind of 'ability for use' or schemata in designing a discourse model can be a reply to this criticism against EPP teachers and discourse/genres analysts who treat professional genres as simply textual artifacts (Bhatia, 1993; Swales, 1990) that 'EPP students are unable to handle the discursive realities of the professional world although they are fully aware of the textual features of the professional genres'. Unfortunately, professional practices have never been taken seriously, although 'contextual factors' which emerge from relevant professional practices and cultures are taken for granted in genre analysis. More recently, however, some analysts seem to be taking a more serious view of what might be regarded as text-external factors, leading to an integration of discursive and professional practices of the professions, often complementing each other (Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson, 1999; Bazerman & Paradis, 1991; Bhatia, 2004; Freedman &Medway, 1994; Russell, 1997; Smart, 1998; Swales, 1998).

Educational approaches which have vocational and professional orientation argue that transfer of skills across tasks and courses, as well as between educational settings and professional domains is often assumed to be a powerful driver for student motivation, provided that the learner will be able to experience the transparency and authenticity of simulations, templates and examples (Inmaculada & Räisänen, 2008). But, in specialized translation courses, for example, such an approach to learning may limit the learning arena and potential for learning.

The solution proposed in this article is that by enhancing the discursivity of assessment in a cycle of assessment-assignment, as described in Hickey's multilevel assessment framework, a kind of lesson plan can be designed for the translator training courses upon which teacher can control both the students' level of understanding in relation to a particular point in curricular program and their orientation power toward occupational end points (purposes).

3. From multi-level assessment framework to discursivity in classroom setting

A number of scholars who talk from a more situative and socio-cultural position (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991) define learning as simply the enhancement of participation in discursive practices and knowing as fundamentally social discourse to enhance formative assessment and practice. For example, Hickey, Mewborn, Beckmann, Laneharl & Cohen (2005) view social interaction as integral to meaning making and learning (e.g., Mercer, 2004; Wickman & Ostman, 2002; Wortham, 2005), and consider the understanding and skills of individuals as well. Such scholars characterize the act of completing individual assessments as another form of participation in a trajectory of discursive practices that relate understanding in social situations to that which is

"gathered" in more individualized contexts. It is in this situation that students must engage the text and inscriptions of assessments in meaningful ways. This practice necessarily draws upon other, less formal, discursive representations. Hickey et.al (2005) considered this latter type in their analyses, which was then refined across three stages with the goal of scaffolding students' abilities to navigate more formal discursive representation such as those on achievement tests.

It is believed that the enactment of a curriculum is socially constituted and sustained by individuals within participatory contexts that shape students' and teachers' engagement (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). These contexts emerge throughout and can endure across the school year and within particular curricular units, but also in relation to broader cultural contexts (Wortham, 2005). Learning about social identity development in informal classroom contexts (such as discursive feedback activities referred to here) is as important as content and process learning in more formal or "official" contexts (such as achievement tests).

In this article, "discursive" representation of knowledge that is unique to socio-cultural views is taken as the ideal for translation classroom assessment practices that are intended to directly advance trainees toward professionalism in the cycles of assessment based framework, with socio-culturalist representations at the more immediate levels, rationalist representations at the middle levels, and empiricist representations at the more remote levels. The most important point is that the representations of knowledge become more formal as the distance of the assessment level increases.

4. Enactment approach toward productive domain discourse of translation

As it is implied in the literature (Riazi & Razmjoo, 2004; Jamalimanesh, 2009), viewing translation teaching as a learning process is a perceived necessity, if translation teaching is going to be appreciated as an intellectual discipline. On the other hand, taken from the definitions, translation is both a science and Craft (Newmark, 1988). It means that translation teaching must be academic on its science part and professional on its craft side, with one side excluded results in a faulty process. It is for this reason that in the contexts like Iran, where in translation curriculum, instead of bolstering the craftsmanship mentality in the trainees, focus is just on upgrading the language proficiency, the teacher's curriculum approaches and strategies in the translation classes gain a more special significance. It is here, in translation courses, that the idea of "curriculum making" (Craig, 2006, p. 261), "curriculum enactment" (Snyder, Bolin & Zumwalt 1992, p. 428) or "process curriculum" (Skilbeck,1982, Clandinin & Connelly, 1992, Kelly, 1999) can best come into view to provide a forum where less- trained teacher and the faulty official curriculum grow to become experienced and experiential respectively out of the experience of the students and teachers. (Shawer, Gilmore & Banks-Joseph, 2008).

The curriculum enactment approach, as explicated by Snyder, et al. (1992), reflects social constructivism (Wells, 1999), involving active learning, social and sequential construction of more complex cognitive schemas, and student interests and needs (Piaget, 1955; Richardson, 1997; Terwel, 2005). Curriculum knowledge is no longer a product, but ongoing constructions out of ''the enacted experiences. [that] students and teacher create'' (1992, p. 410). External knowledge is ''viewed as a resource for teachers who create curriculum as they engage in the ongoing process of teaching and learning in the classroom.'' Moreover, ''it is they and their students who create the enacted curriculum. Teachers are creators rather than primarily receivers of curriculum knowledge.'' Curriculum change is neither about curriculum implementation nor adaptation. It is ''a process of growth for teachers and students, a change in thinking and practice'' (Snyder et al., 1992, p. 429).

In terms of the transfer of learning also, grand theories of knowing and learning, i.e. empiricist, rationalist, socioculturalist, take three different views of knowing, learning and transfer and the ideal methods for assessing that knowledge which are detailed in Greeno, Collins & Resnick (1996), Hickey and Pellegrino (2005), and Hickey and Zuiker (2003) and are summarized in table 1.

Table 1: Transfer dimensions; Theories of Knowing and Learning, Levels of Assessment, Functions of Assessment

Assessment of Transfer Dimensions	Contents of Dimensions	Description / Example of Dimension Contents
Theories of Knowing and Learning (i.e. Assumptions about Transfer)	▪Empiricist ▪Rationalist ▪Sociocultural	▪**Transfer of Association** ▪**Transfer of Schema** ▪**Transfer of Participation**
Levels of Assessment (i.e. Distance from a Particular Learning Environment)	▪Immediate ▪Close ▪Proximal ▪Distal ▪Remote	▪**Informal Observation** ▪**Semi-formal classroom assessment** ▪**Formal classroom Assessment** ▪**Criterion referenced test** ▪**Norm referenced test**
Functions of Assessment	▪**Formative** ▪**Summative**	▪**Advancing Knowledge and Learning** ▪**Measuring Knowledge and Learning**

As mentioned in Hickey et al. (2005) is its sharp delineation between contemporary sociocultural views of knowing and learning and modem cognitive views. o called "situative" sociocultural views of knowing and learning reject the notion that knowledge is acquired by and resident in the minds of individual knowers (e.g. Greeno, et al., 1996; Wenger, 1998). Rather, knowledge is regarded as being constructed through, and deeply embedded in, ritualized cultural practices. The essential feature of these views is that they treat collective participation in social activity as the primary phenomenon in knowledgeable human activity. In doing so, they treat the cognition of individuals and the behavior of individuals as secondary phenomena.

5. Mapping multi-level assessment onto the curriculum enactment strategies

Based on the results of the study conducted by Shawer (2010), when teachers take curriculum enactment strategies into use and act as the curriculum makers, at first, conduct a needs assessment to generate themes. These are some of the questions worth asking:

- What should participants hear, read, view, explore or otherwise encounter? This knowledge is "*worth being familiar with*".
- What knowledge and skills should they know and be able to do? These facts/concepts/principles/ processes/ strategies/methods are "*important to know and do*".
- What big ideas and important understandings should learners retain long after they've forgotten the details of the courses? These choices are the "enduring understanding".

Determining the best content for the course and concrete specific learning goals can be achieved only by answering the above questions.

It is at this point that assessment based syllabus and curriculum enactment approach can make a conjuncture; where teacher tries to determine the acceptable written evidence of the learning in advance**.**

The following questions must be answered:

- What kinds of written evidence could you collect that best shows the kind of learning you want?
- What evidence of "familiar" learning could be in the form of translation?
- What evidence of "important learning" could be in the form of translation?
- What evidence of "enduring learning" could be in the form of translation?

Hickey and Pellegrino (2005) classify assessments into three categories: close, proximal, and distal. Close measures are activity- oriented and thus assessment tasks that include the same content and expected skill performance that students engaged in as part of their instructional treatment. While familiar to them, they are not exactly the same activities. Proximal level measures or curriculum- oriented assessment involves evaluation of performance in a different context and with different content than that which existed in the primary learning activities and established curriculum. Finally, distal measures or standards-oriented assessment usually measures how students make use of learned skills in contexts or fields which differ greatly from the instructional context or field, for example, when social studies are used instead of the science content (Hickey & Pellegrino, 2005).

As it is evident, a kind of link can be made between levels of the needs which were mentioned before and levels of assessment, based on which, we can plan the curricular activities in a way that free the trainees from the grapple of the situativeness of the classroom practice toward the time-less realities of professionalism. The only thing which is remained is planning the feedback activities which foster the discursive nature of the learning experiences and translation instruction.

Questions to consider are:

- What kinds of responses from the instructor would help student translators achieve these translation expectations?
- What kinds of responses from classmates would help student translators achieve these translation expectations?
- What kinds of responses from others would help student translators achieve these translation expectations?

In this stage, teacher can refine a rubric that defines the four aspects of group discourse (*explaining, listening*, *challenging*, and *reflecting*). After each feedback conversation, trainees review the rubric, informally reflect on their group's discourse along each dimension, and select an aspect of their conversation to work on the next time. Initial results suggest that the rubric is helpful in supporting the students' "reflexive awareness" about their discourse and has promise as a pedagogical tool for promoting and understanding discursive practices (Anderson, Zuiker, Taasoobshirazi, & Hickey, 2007).

Different discursive practices across three levels of assessment are presented in Table 2 bellow.

Table 2: Trajectory of discursive practice across three assessment levels (Hickey and Pellegrino, 2005)

Assessment level	Assessment format	Relationship to curriculum	Scale	Primary discourse	Feedback format	Analysis method
Close	Activity-oriented *quiz*, informal and ungraded	Same content and context	Four times within the curriculum	Feedback conversation in small group discussion	Discursive	Discourse analysis of feedback conversation; in-class observation
Proximal	Curriculum-oriented *examination*, semi-formal	Same content, different	Once before and after the	Written representation and feedback	Written representation and discursive feedback	Discourse analysis of feedback conversation;

	and graded	context	curriculum	conversation	conversation	examination of responses to items
Distal	Standard-oriented *text*, formal and scored	Different content and context	Once before and after the curriculum	Written representation only	Written representation only	Examination of responses to items

6. Concluding remarks

Regarding the existing inattention among the translation curriculum developers in Iran toward enhancing craftsmanship in translator training courses, this article proposed an approach to coordinating and enhancing multiple levels of assessment and discursive feedback as an aid to teaching and learning of translation. The study calls attention to the interactions in feedback activities across three stages corresponding to close, proximal and distal levels of assessing students' productive ability in translating through discursive activities and discursive feedback. The goal of this proposal is to develop an understanding of the ways that a situative approach to assessment and practice supports learning of a 'descriptive process'. It can be said that student and teacher engagement in collaborative activities support and constrain meaningful understanding, which are considered in terms of a trajectory of participation in and across conversations and multilevel assessments, as well as individual learning gains on formal classroom examinations and standards-oriented external tests. Analyses of supplementary articulation of genre concepts—as social action—suggest that participation in social forms of scientific engagement supports both learning and subsequent performance in more formal contexts (Anderson et al., 2007). The curriculum making strategies proposed in this study suggest design principles for integrating the formative functions of discursive feedback with the summative functions of traditional assessment, by the enhancement of extended discourse in its different form to be a context for participation(Anderson et al., 2007).

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